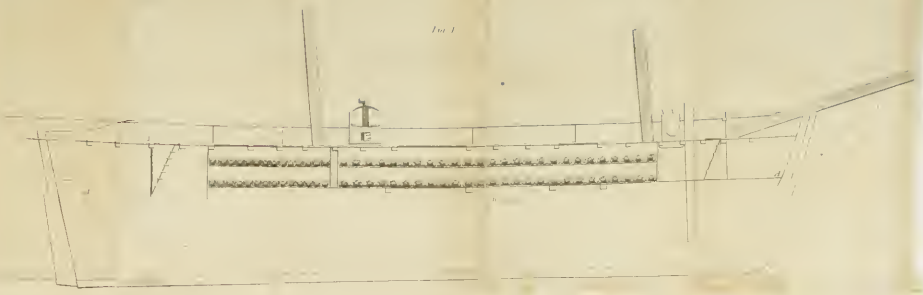

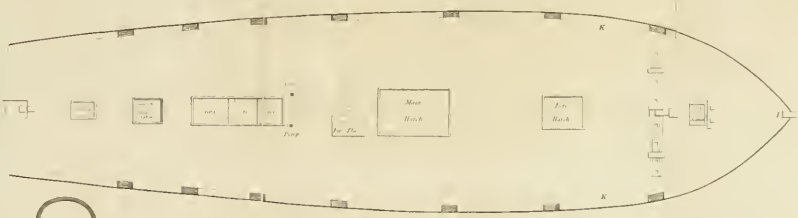

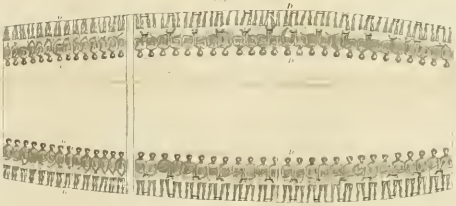

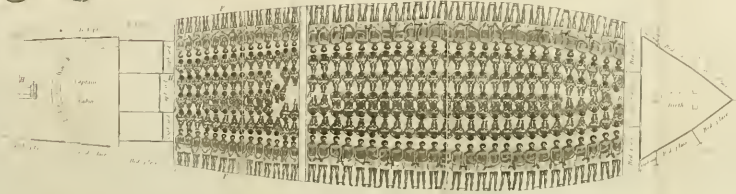

CASE

OF

THE VIGILANTE,

A SHIP EMPLOYED IN

The Slave-Trade;

WITH SOME

REFLECTIONS ON THAT TRAFFIC.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY HARVEY, DARTON, & CO.
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1823.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

The following narrative is published by a Committee of the Religious Society of Friends in London, who act on behalf of their brethren in this nation and Ireland, to aid in promoting the total Abolition of the Slave-trade. The circumstances of the case are described from official and authentic documents; in publishing which, the Committee wish it to be distinctly understood, that they in no degree compromise the well-known testimony of the Society, against fighting; and the drawing was taken, by an able draftsman, at Portsmouth, whilst the vessel was detained there, previously to the determination of the British government on the way in which it should be disposed of.

References to the Sketch of the Vigilante.

Fig. 1. Longitudinal Section of the Ship.
2. Plan of the upper deck.
3. Plan of the wings, in the men and women's room, in which the slaves here described were found, at the time of the capture of the vessel, lying on a platform between the upper and lower decks*.
4. Plan of the lower deck.
5. Transverse Section of the Ship, from the water-line upward.
6. Iron collar fastened about the neck of the slaves.
7. Padlock to the neck-collar.
8. Iron fetters put on the arms and legs of the slaves.

	ft.	*in.*
Length of the lower deck, at AA. Fig. 1.	81	7
Height between decks from deck to deck	4	8
Length of the men's room, BB. Fig. 4.	37	0
Breadth of the men's room, CC.	22	4
Breadth of the platforms in the men's room, DD. Fig. 3.	5	3
Length of the women's room, EE. Fig. 4.	14	4
Breadth of the women's room, FF.	19	4
Breadth of the platforms in the women's room, GG. Fig. 3.	4	10
Length of the cabin, HH. Fig. 4.	18	0
Height of the Cabin	6	5
Length of the upper deck, at II. Fig. 2.	91	0
Breadth of the upper deck, at KK.	22	3

The *green lines* in Fig. 1 and 5, denote the water.

N. B. The number of slaves stowed { in the men's room .. 227 / in the women's room . 120

347

* The slaves were found lying on their backs, on the lower deck, at they are here represented: those in the centre were sitting, some in the posture in which they are here shown, and others with their legs bent under them, resting upon the soles of their feet.

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CASE OF

THE VIGILANTE, *&c.*

THE annexed plate is a drawing of a vessel employed in the Slave-trade, which was captured by Lieutenant Mildmay, in the river Bonny, on the coast of Africa, on the 15th of 4th month, (April,) 1822. The brig, named the Vigilante, was from Nantes. It was 240 tons burden, and had on board, at the time it was taken, 345 slaves. It was manned by thirty men, armed with four twelve-pounders, all of which were brought over on one side for the attack. The circumstances of the case are thus stated: Sir Robert Mends was commander of a squadron off the coast of Africa, stationed there by the British government, to prevent the infraction of the laws for the abolition of the Slave-trade. He sent out Lieutenant Mildmay, with the boats belonging to his vessels, to reconnoitre in the river Bonny, a place notorious for the carrying on of this traffic. The boats having crossed the bar soon

after day-light, about seven o'clock, six sail, (two schooners and four brigs,) were observed lying at anchor off the town of Bonny. When the boats were about four miles off, they displayed their colours; and, as they advanced, the slave-vessels were seen moored across the stream, with springs on their cables, all armed, with apparently about 400 slaves on board, and the crews fully prepared to resist any attack that might be made upon them. The two schooners and three of the brigs opened a heavy fire of canister and grape-shot, and musketry, upon the English boats as they advanced. When the latter were near enough for their shots to take effect, the firing was returned. They advanced, and in a short time took possession of all the vessels.

The other ships proved to be the Yeanam, a Spanish schooner from the Havannah, 306 tons, 380 slaves on board: the Vicua, a Spanish schooner from the Havannah, 180 tons, 325 slaves on board: the Petite Betsey, a French brig from Nantes, 184 tons, 218 slaves on board: the Ursule, a French brigantine from St. Pierre, Martinique, 100 tons, 347 slaves on board:—all manned and armed in such a way, as that they might fight desperately, if attacked. The Theodore, a French brig, had no slaves on board; but they were on shore, in readiness for embarkation.

Many of the slaves jumped overboard during the engagement, and were devoured by the sharks. On board the Yeanam, which made the most determined resistance, the slaves suffered much: there

were four killed, and ten wounded. Of the ten wounded, three were females: one innocent girl about ten years of age, lost both her legs, another her right arm, and a third was shot in the side. Even after the Spanish sailors had resigned their vessel to the British seamen, a number of them skulked below, and arming the slaves with muskets made them fire upwards upon the British. On board this ship, Lieutenant Mildmay observed a slave-girl, about twelve or thirteen years of age, in irons, to which was fastened a thick iron chain, ten feet in length, that was dragged along as she moved. He ordered the girl to be instantly released from this fetter; and that the captain, who had treated her so cruelly, should not be ignorant of the pain inflicted upon an unprotected and innocent child, the irons were ordered to be put on him.

The Spanish schooner Vicua, when taken possession of, had a lighted match, hanging over the open magazine-hatch. The match was lighted and placed there by the crew, before they leaped overboard and swam for the shore: it was seen by one of the British seamen, who put his hat under the burning wick, and removed it. The magazine contained a large quantity of powder: one spark from the flaming match would have blown up 325 unfortunate victims, ironed in the hold. These monsters in iniquity deeply regretted, after the action, the failure of their diabolical plan.

The slaves, at the time of the capture of the vessel, were found in the wretched condition as

exhibited in this plate: some lying on their backs, others sitting on the bottom of the ships. They were chained to each other by the arms and legs. Iron collars were round their necks, of which, see a drawing, Fig. 6. In addition to these provisions for confinement, they were fastened together by a long chain, which connected several of the collars, for their greater security in their dismal prison. Thumb-screws, to be used as instruments of torture, were also found in the vessel. From their confinement and sufferings, they often injured themselves by beating; and vented their grief upon such as were next them, by biting and tearing their flesh. Some of them were bound in cords, and many had their arms grievously lacerated. Upwards of 150 of the slaves died on their passage to Sierra Leone. The Spanish schooner from the Havannah was separated from the other vessels in a dreadful storm, as they were proceeding to this port. She was lost, and the 380 slaves perished! The vessels were taken to that port: those from Spain were left for adjudication by the Mixed Commission Court of Great Britain and Spain: those from France were sent to England, to be disposed of by the British government, which ordered them to sail to France. The slaves were all liberated, and distributed in the colony of Sierra Leone, through the villages settled by other captive negroes: here they have regained their freedom, and have the opportunity of being instructed in the arts of agriculture and mechanics.

What a number of reflections does this affecting case awaken. Here is a proof, to a demonstration, brought home to the eyes and ears of the people of Europe, of the cruelties and wickedness exercised towards the poor negroes. In defiance of the laws of his country, in violation of every feeling of humanity, the merchant who trades in human blood not only embarks his property, and employs his seamen, to seize the innocent Africans, but he increases his crew, and supplies them with arms and ammunition, to kill all who would interrupt them in their career of wickedness. Here we see upwards of 1500 human beings torn from their homes, bought for a trifling price, and destined to perpetual bondage in an unknown land. Thus this murderous traffic is kept up, to gratify the avarice of Europeans—of a people who boast that they themselves are far advanced in habits of refinement, and in the enjoyments of civilized and polished society. How long will they suffer this deep reproach to be brought against them?

Reader! look at the Plate, and dwell for a few moments on those emotions which thou must feel. Think of the miseries to which these wretched, harmless sufferers are subjected. Picture to thyself a scene, in which, in this narrow space, one is bemoaning the loss of his nearest connexions in life, and brooding, in melancholy sadness, over the cruelties and sufferings under which he is to spend the remainder of his days. See another pining with sickness, languid from loss of appetite, and from the noxious air which

he must breathe, treated in this wretched condition with indifference, and even with unkindness, by those who lie next him. Look at a third, subjected to the torture of the thumb-screw, or some other instrument of pain, because he refuses to partake of food which, in his mournful state, he cannot relish. Think of others who are biting each other's flesh, and thus, in the bitterness of their grief, attempting to vent the anguish of their hearts. When thou hast contemplated this spectacle of accumulated suffering, ask thyself these questions: What crimes have these, my brethren and sisters, the children of one common Parent, committed?—what insult have they offered to their cruel persecutors?—for what reason do they thus incur the infliction of imprisonment, torture, and misery? The answer to these inquiries is, None whatever:—they are innocent, unprotected sufferers.

Wilt thou, with this scene before thine eyes;—wilt thou, in the remembrance that it is only a specimen of that cruelty which, from year to year, has been practised in hundreds of vessels, and upon tens of thousands of thy fellow-mortals:—wilt thou any longer hesitate to raise thy voice on behalf of the enslaved Africans; to do thy utmost to make known to others the continuance of scenes of agony and cruelty; and boldly to assert that, although their colour is different from thine, and their rulers may sell them into cruel bondage, they are equally with thyself entitled to the blessing of liberty?

Remember (and oh that this thought might

pierce the very hearts of their persecutors) remember that their cries and sufferings are heard by that Almighty Being, whose all-seeing eye penetrateth every corner of the globe. Though man may treat them with hard-heartedness and cruelty, God beholdeth them with tender compassion and pity; and the time will certainly arrive when He will manifest his justice, and punish the oppressor. Remember, and consider, that if thou turn a deaf ear to the cries of the innocent, and care not for their sufferings, thou mayst become a partaker of other men's guilt, and not stand acquitted in the sight of Heaven.

Harvey, Darton, and Co. Printers, Gracechurch-Street, London.